

Electronic doodles jazz up text

Back in the scissors-and-paste days of layout design, you could spice up columns of text with generic drawings known as "clip art." Now that computers have muscled into graphics, these doodles are available on disk at image libraries called PicturePaks.

Each library of 180 images costs \$145. Are they worth it? And are they good enough to use in a typical office setting? Because PicturePak is not a software program, it is up to your particular drawing, word processing, or desktop publishing program to recognize and manipulate the images. The professionally drawn PicturePak images are presented in a size and weight that minimizes the jagged edges that are sometimes seen in enlarged graphics.

Combining an image with text is easy. Because many mainstream word processors, such as WordPerfect 5.0, can now handle graphics, it's just a matter of looking up an image in the PicturePak catalog and copying it from disk to your application. Then you can re-size or re-orient the image to fit your



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PicturePak libraries:

■ **Sales & Marketing Edition.** Included are trophies, athletes performing, a mousetrap baited with cheese, human outlines and figures, houses, churches, government buildings, political maps, sports cars, trucks, planes, boats, musical instruments and symbols for eating out and playing sports.

■ **Finance & Administration Edition.** Under the headings of "time & money," "productivity & performance," and "communications & technology" are a number of clock and watch drawings, images of seasons, symbols for cur-

rency, line drawings of business forms, and various suggestions of computer components.

■ **Executive & Management Edition.** Included are arrows, bombs with burning fuses, and a variety of flag motifs, bold treatments to words like "action," "benefits," "team;" a number of outlines — empty book pages, cartoon-like dialogue boxes, and even an empty sardine can — that you can fill in with your own text.

■ **Federal Government Edition.** You could become an instant political cartoonist with this repertory of ready-made drawings. If you want to get serious about government drawings, there is also a state and local government PicturePak library.

On the downside, while these electronic sketches are professionally drawn, many are amateurish subjects.

You really have to scrutinize an entire library to find images that might fit your publishing style. At \$145 per library, the unit cost of just the few images you might use turns out to be very high.

■ **The Bottom Line.** Electronic clip art probably will thrive for the same reasons that have made paper clip art so popular — it's a fast way to add drawings to page layouts. Commissioning original art work is out of the question for most small-time publications.

But unless you're a graphic artist, chances are that your use of clip art will look amateurish even with these professionally drawn images. And overuse comes across even worse.

The PicturePaks are snazzy, but I suspect that they'll sit on the shelf and gather dust in most office settings.

PicturePaks are available from Marketing Graphics Inc., 4401 Dominion Blvd., Suite 210, Glen Allen, Va. 23060.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity.